



State of California  
The Natural Resources Agency  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**PROJECT TITLE** Highlands Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Project

**PROJECT LOCATION** Sec. 9 & 16, T6N, R5W, MDBM

**COUNTY** San Mateo

**LEAD AGENCY** California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project takes place on undeveloped wildland that completely surrounds the Highlands community of San Mateo County; this property is owned and managed as open space by the Highlands Recreation District (HRD). The Highlands is a community of over 800 homes and approximately 2500 residents in unincorporated San Mateo County. The high population in the area combined with an adjacent freeway and arterial roads present ample opportunity for ignitions, and as a result, significant wildfire risk. One of the goals of the proposed project is to mitigate the threat of wildfire to habitable structures by utilizing CAL FIRE hand crews to create an approximate 100' shaded fuel break and reduced fuel buffer zone between HRD managed open space and a residential community with very high historical and assessed value. HRD owned open space totals 40 acres directly contiguous to 120 residential properties, and adjacent to nearly 700 additional properties within the district boundaries. The proposed shaded fuel break would provide vegetation treatment and wildfire fuel reduction on approximately 22 acres of oak woodland, chaparral, and grasslands. The treatment will utilize hand crews to remove small diameter, suppressed trees (<12" dbh), 50-70% of the brush species and dead/downed woody debris. Cut material will be chipped on-site and/or lopped-and-scattered. Riparian areas and wet areas associated with seeps and springs will be excluded from project activities.

### EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 § 15304 Minor Alterations to Land  
☐ Statutory Exemption (state code section):  
☐ Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)  
☐ Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))  
☐ Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

### REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The work proposed is a minor alteration to vegetation which does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees and is consistent with Categorical Exemption Class 4 - Minor Alterations to Land. No activity is proposed that is listed as a limitation under CCR 15300.2 (a-f).

Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at San Mateo-Santa Cruz Unit Headquarters, 6059 Highway 9, Felton, CA 95018.

### DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

MAR 15 2016

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

  
Helge Eng, Deputy Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

3/16/16  
Date